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Toronto & GTA

WARMINGTON: 'Freedom' truckers may form world's longest convoy

Joe Warmington

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Supporters of the "Freedom Convoy" of truckers recently gathered on the edge of the Trans-Canada Hwy., east of Calgary PHOTO BY GAVIN YOUNG /Postmedia Network

According to Guinness World Records, the longest truck convoy ever recorded was 7.5 km long, in Egypt in 2020.

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The Freedom Convoy heading from British Columbia to Ottawa is said to be considerably longer.



“It’s (stretched over) 70 km long,” said Benjamin Dichter, spokesman for the Freedom Convoy 2022. “I have seen footage from an airplane. It’s impressive.”

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(The actual of the convoy has not been independently verified)

By Wednesday, truckers hope to have taken their protest through to Manitoba and will make it to southern Ontario on Friday.

Plans call for the convoy to arrive in Ottawa on Saturday for a protest.

If it gets there on time — and if the convoy holds together as it has in British Columbia, Alberta and Saskatchewan — it could be 10 times larger than the world record.

“The largest parade of trucks consisted of 480 trucks and is achieved by Tahya Misr Fund (Egypt), in Cairo, Egypt, on 20 November 2020,” Guinness says on its website. “With a length of 7.5 km, Tahya Misr Fund was able to organize a parade of 480 trucks, amid the harsh weather and heavy rain, breaking the Guinness World Records title for the largest parade of trucks, which was achieved 16 years ago in the Netherlands with a parade size of 416 trucks.”

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There are estimates the Canadian convoy could comprise 50,000 trucks from the West, East, and even from the United States. It's difficult to speculate what will transpire in the days ahead.

It looks like Ottawa could be swamped with long-haul trucks on Jan. 29. But with winter weather and potential issues, including possible roadblocks or traffic snarls, time will tell.

Whatever happens, it won't be for lack of support.

Thousands of Canadians have lined the route, cheered from overpasses and offered to feed drivers in their homes and restaurants.

It's a grassroots demonstration that has become far bigger than anything organizers had envisioned.

With that comes problems. Media reports said a GoFundMe campaign for the convoy, which had surpassed \$5 million by Wednesday morning, had been frozen by GoFundMe.

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"Fake news," said Dichter, whose name — along with Tamara Lich — is listed as an organizer. "It's not true."

GoFundMe spokesman Rachel Hollis told the *Toronto Sun* “we are continuing to work directly with the organizer to gather information about how funds are being distributed. This is part of our standard process to ensure the protection of all donors” and “once a withdrawal plan is provided by the organizer, our team is on standby to safely and quickly deliver the funds.”



Organizers have said the raised money, far more than they ever anticipated, is to help truckers with fuel, lodging and food costs.

“But this has never been about that money,” said Dichter, who added with or without it, the convoy will roll forward.

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Dichter said he and Lich are the only two speaking on behalf of the Freedom Convoy. So when social media posts talk of insurrection or violence, he added, it will be clear such agitators or saboteurs are not involved in organizing their “peaceful” and “law-abiding” demonstration.

The protest, Dichter said, is about lifting vaccine mandates for truckers at the Canada-U.S. border and other issues relating to the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, including forcing drivers to wear masks in trucks.

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GUNTER: Roll on, Freedom Convoy

For the public, the convoy has become a beacon of hope that overreaching COVID-19 lockdowns, restrictions and mandates will soon come to an end.

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However, the Liberal government is standing firm.

“The government of Canada and the Canadian Trucking Alliance both agree that vaccination, used in combination with preventative public health measures, is the most effective tool to reduce the risk of COVID-19 for Canadians, and to protect public health,” said a joint

statement from federal cabinet ministers Omar Alghabra, Seamus O'Regan and Carla Qualtrough, and Canadian Trucking Alliance president Stephen Laskowski.

This is shaping up to be a potential game of chicken, and the world convoy record may fall, too.

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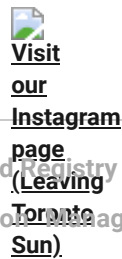
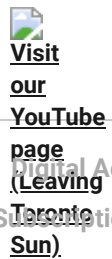
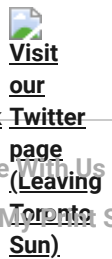
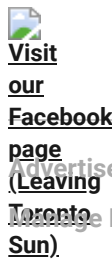
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